

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 AID-05
TRSE-00 OMB-01 /108 W
-----028136 170831Z /11

R 170555Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6930
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI BY POUCH
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
USINT HAVANA
USMISSION USNATO
USCINCEUR VAHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ADDIS ABABA 0238

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, MOPS, ET, CU, UR
SUBJECT: RECENT MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH SOVIET UNION PROVIDING UNPRECEDENTED
QUANTITY OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO ETHIOPIA AND CUBA CON-
TRIBUTING SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF "ADVISERS," INTERPERSONAL
RELATIONS WITH FIELD-LEVEL ETHIOPIAN TROOPS RESULTING IN
SOME FRICTION BUT NOT YET SUBSTANTIAL ENOUGH TO CAUSE
SERIOUS PROBLEMS. THERE SCATTERED REPORTS AND RUMORS OF
POOR MORALE AMONG REGULAR TROOPS AND MILITIA, BUT THIS
DOES NOT APPEAR WIDESPREAD ENOUGH EITHER, TO CREATE
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UNCONTROLLABLE SITUATION. WHILE ETHIOPIANS MAINTAIN
DEFENSIVE POSITIONS, MORALE SEEMS ADEQUATE TO HOLD
GROUND. HOWEVER, IT NOT YET KNOWN HOW ETHIOPIANS
WILL REACT DURING ANY OFFENSIVE CAMPAIGN. PAST RESULTS,
ALTHOUGH ONLY TENTATIVE AND NOT SUBSTANTIALLY SUPPORTED
BY FOREIGN TROOPS, HAVE NOT PROVEN EITHER SUCCESSFUL'
OR ENCOURAGING TO DIRG. END SUMMARY.

1. SOVIET MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH ETHIOPIA REPORTED CREATING FRICTION AMONG BROAD CROSS SECTION OF ETHIOPIAN FORCES. FAIRLY RELIABLE SOURCE CITED ETHIOPIAN AIR FORCE (EAF) OFFICERS WHO ABLE FLY MIG AIRCRAFT "BETTER THAN SOVIET ADVISORS." SOURCE SAID EAF PILOTS USING TECHNIQUES LEARNED IN US ON F-5'S TO ENHANCE PERFORMANCE OF MIG'S AND ARE IRRITATING ALLEGEDLY LESS SKILLED SOVIETS. HEAVY-HANDED ATTITUDE BY SOVIETS TOWARD ETHIOPIANS ALSO REPORTEDLY CAUSING STRAINS, BUT OGADEN AND ERITREAN CONFLICTS AND CONCOMITANT NECESSITY FOR EQUIPMENT, WHICH EAF PERSONNEL PLEASED ARRIVING PROMPTLY, OVERCOMING INTERPERSONAL FRICTION, AT LEAST FOR MOMENT.

2. CUBAN MILITARY ROLE HAVING MIXED RESULTS AT FRONT LINES. SOURCE STATED CUBAN PERSONNEL PARTICIPATING ON SOUTHERN FRONT IN SIDAMO PROVINCE, AS WELL AS EASTERN FRONT. ETHIOPIANS GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH CUBAN ARTILLERY EFFORTS TO KEEP SOMALIS AT SOME DISTANCE FROM CAMPS BUT HAVE REMARKED UPON LACK OF CUBAN COVERAGE TO CONFRONT SOMALIS IN CLOSE, SMALL ARMS COMBAT. (COMMENT: NON-PARTICIPATION BY CUBANS IN CLOSE COMBAT PROBABLY MORE RESULT OF ORDERS THAN LACK OF COURAGE, BUT IT INTERPRETED UNFAVORABLY BY ETHIOPIAN COMBAT TROOPS WHO IN FRONT LINES LOSING THEIR LIVES.)
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SOURCE TOTALLY CONVINCED CUBANS OPERATING FIELD ARTILLERY, INCLUDING ROCKETS.

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3. FROM ANOTHER SOURCE, FRENCH MILATT BELIEVES THERE PROBABLY AT LEAST 1,000 UNIFORMED CUBANS ON EASTERN FRONT, BUT COULD NOT GIVE NUMERICAL BREAKDOWN OF HOW MANY WERE COMBAT TROOPS, TECHNICAL ADVISERS, OR MEDICAL PERSONNEL. FRENCH CONSUL IN DIRE DAWA REPORTED DOWNING OF ETHIOPIAN MIG AIRCRAFT NEAR DIRE DAWA WEEK OF JAN 2-6, BUT COULD NOT SPECIFY EXACT DATE. ROAD BETWEEN HARAR AND DIRE DAWA WAS OPEN AND HAD NOT BEEN INTERDICTED FOR SOME TIME. SITUATION CALM IN BOTH DIRE DAWA AND HARAR, ALTHOUGH SOMALI MORTAR ROUNDS OCCASIONALLY LANDED IN HARAR.

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4. MORALE AMONG MILITIA AND REGULAR TROOPS IN VARIOUS PARTS OF COUNTRY IS MIXED, BUT GENERALLY POOR. ON SOUTHERN FRONT, SOURCE PARA 1 ABOVE RECOUNTED FIGHTING IN NEGHELLI AREA IN EARLY DECEMBER. HE SAID ETHIOPIAN OPERATION BEGAN WITH MILITIA IN VANGUARD FACING SOMALIS, BACKED UP BY RETIRED VETERANS WHO HAD BEEN RECALLED, AND THEY IN TURN BACKED UP BY FLAME TROOPS. WHEN FIGHTING STARTED TO CAUSE HEAVY ETHIOPIAN CASUALTIES, VETERANS TURNED TO RETREAT TO SAFER POSITIONS, BUT WERE FIRED ON BY FLAME TROOPS. MILITIA, BELIEVING THEY WERE BEING ATTACKED FROM REAR, TURNED AND ALSO BEGAN FIRING ON VETERANS. SOURCE CLAIMED OVER 500 ETHIOPIAN CASUALTIES RESULTED FROM THIS ONE BATTLE.

5. SOURCE ALLEGED NUMEROUS DESERTIONS IN BALE PROVINCE COMMON AMONG MILITIA AND SOME OF YOUNGER REGULAR TROOPS. ALSO ON EASTERN FRONT HE SAID AT LEAST 500 TROOPS HAD DESERTED, BUT THAT 70 HAD BEEN CAPTURED NEAR DEBRE BERHAN AND HAD BEEN EXECUTED. SOURCE ALSO CITED LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS OF FOOD, SHELTER, CLOTHING AND ARMS AS CONTRIBUTING TO LOW MORALE. DIRG ALSO ENCOUNTERING

DIFFICULTY IN ENLISTING NEW RECRUITS FOR MILITIA, ESPECIALLY IN SIDAMO, ARSSI, WOLLEGA, ILLUBABOR AND NORTHERN PROVINCES WHICH HIT HARD BY ORIGINAL MILITIA RECRUITMENT. SOURCE SAID THERE CURRENTLY 25,000 PERSONS AT TATEK MEDA (MILITIA TRAINING CAMP 25 KMS FROM ADDIS), WHO HAVE BEEN THERE ALMOST TWO MONTHS. HE THOUGHT ETHIOPIANS DOING MOST OF TRAINING, BUT THAT CUBANS PARTICIPATING ACTIVELY. HE ADDED, MILITIA OFFICER (PROBABLY MAJ. TEFERRA WOLDE-TENSAE) PREPARING LIST OF MILITIA KIA'S, WIA'S, AND MIA'S WHICH MIGHT BE COMPLETE IN MONTH OR TWO. SOURCE BELIEVED MILITIA STRENGTH 60,000 AT EASTERN FRONT ALONE.

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THERE GENERAL EXPECTATION ETHIOPIANS WILL CARRY DAY AGAINST SOMALIS IN OGADEN, IT NOT YET CERTAIN. WHILE ETHIOPIANS LIKELY TO HAVE COMPARATIVE EQUIPMENT ADVANTAGE, CONFIDENTIAL

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SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE MILITIA STILL NOT HIGHLY EFFECTIVE FIGHTING FORCE AND MAY NOT BE UP TO TASK OF CONDUCTING SUCCESSFUL OFFENSIVE. IN ANY CASE, ETHIOPIANS EXPECT FIGHTING TO CONTINUE FOR SOME TIME EVEN IF OFFENSIVE GOES WELL. THEN PROBLEM OF ANTAGONISM BETWEEN REGULAR TROOPS, MILITIA AND DIRG MAY LEAD TO FURTHER CONFRONTATIONS, ESPECIALLY GIVEN TENSIONS ARISING AT WAR FRONT AND FROM PRESENCE OF FOREIGN ADVISORS. ADDING MORE ARMED AND UNWILLING RECRUITS TO MILITIA ALSO MAY COMPOUND FUTURE DIFFICULTIES. MATERN

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